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Wrestling with Father Shakespeare: Contemporary Revisions of
King Lear and The Tempest

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of English
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in English

by
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May 2004

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ABSTRACT

Wrestling with Father Shakespeare: Contemporary Revisions of King Lear and The Tempest

by

Erin Melinda Denise Presley

In Shakespeare's The Tempest and King Lear, the relationship between the father and his children affects the progression and outcome of events. Goneril and Regan oppose Lear after Cordelia's untimely rebellion and disownment. In The Tempest, Caliban desires to overthrow Prospero for freedom. Similarly, the appropriative offspring also exhibit rebellious "children" challenging authority. In Jane Smiley's revision of King Lear and Aimé Césaire's rewriting of The Tempest, defiance renders the children fatherless. In Disney's The Little Mermaid, Ariel initially disregards her father but ultimately accepts his rule. In Gloria Naylor's Mama Day, the text itself becomes an orphan as the matriarchy flourishes.

Although there appear to be few similarities between these works, the familial dynamic follows a similar formula: the children disobey, but only those who eventually accept the principles of the patriarchy are able to maintain a relationship with their parents; the children who reject the authority become orphans.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Shakespeare's The Tempest and King Lear, the relationship between the father and his children plays an integral role in the progression and outcome of events. Goneril and Regan stand against Lear after Cordelia's untimely rebellion and subsequent disownment by her father. In The Tempest, Miranda disobeys Prospero to pursue Ferdinand, while Caliban desires to overthrow Prospero, his European "father," in favor of freedom. Similarly, the works of appropriation that draw upon these rich texts also exhibit rebellious "children" challenging their respective authority figures. In Jane Smiley's feminist revision of King Lear and Aimé Césaire's post-colonial rewriting of The Tempest, defiance renders the children fatherless. Ginny, Rose, and Caliban are all unable to reconcile their differences with their respective father figures; instead, the wayward offspring, who ultimately succumb to the ideology of the patriarchy -- such as Cordelia, Caroline, and Miranda -- maintain a bond with their fathers. A similar result also occurs in more liberal borrowings of The Tempest. In Disney's The Little Mermaid, Ariel, a conflation of Shakespeare's Ariel and Miranda, initially challenges her father's control. In the end, however, she accepts the credibility of her father's rule by becoming a servant of the patriarchy.

In Gloria Naylor's Mama Day, the text itself becomes an orphan as Naylor appears to reject Shakespeare's authority by privileging matriarchal power over the patriarchy. Although there appear to be few similarities between King Lear, The Tempest, and their respective literary offspring, the parent/child dynamic in all of the works follows a similar formula. In each work, the children disobey, but only the ones

who ultimately adhere to the principles of the patriarchal hierarchy are able to maintain a relationship with their parents; the children who reject the authority become orphans.

In this paper, I explore the parent/child dynamic in Shakespeare's King Lear and The Tempest and a selection of appropriative works. My use of the terms "parent" and "child" does not carry the singular meaning of a biological relation, but also denotes the relationship between master and slave and, in regard to Mama Day, the connection between texts. Moreover, I view each text through feminist and/or post-colonial theory.

In the first chapter, I discuss the biological parent/child relationship in King Lear and A Thousand Acres. Goneril and Regan appear to acquiesce to the patriarchal order of Lear as Cordelia refuses to take her father's love test. The role of the mother as analyzed in Coppélia Kahn's "The Absent Mother in King Lear" will serve as a major point of reference. Kahn's article discusses Lear's desire to be mothered by his daughters. According to Kahn, Lear "wants two mutually exclusive things at once: to have absolute control over those closest to him and to be absolutely dependent on them" (40). This conflict leads to Lear's disgust and fear of the feminine as embodied by the actions of Goneril and Regan. After confronting the betrayal of his eldest children, his good daughter Cordelia assumes the role of his mother. Cordelia has returned from France in hopes of reclaiming her father's land and crown. She takes care of the feeble Lear, nurturing both his physical body and his ego. In the end, Cordelia dies; yet, she is able to reestablish a relationship with her father, whereas Goneril and Regan are damned by their patriarch. By viewing the absence of the mother as a presence, the mother's role tragically shapes Lear's patriarchal treatment and expectations of his daughters.

In Smiley's update of the Lear story, she emphasizes the importance of the role of the mother instead of creating an absence that must be psychoanalyzed. One of the most important ingredients in Smiley's recipe for hate is the role of the Cook family mother. In Shakespeare's play, the role of the mother is barely mentioned, but the case in A Thousand Acres is quite different. The mother is definitely a character in the book; although dead, her presence is much more explicit than in Shakespeare's version. In addition to analyzing the Shakespearean borrowings, I analyze the amendments Smiley makes to the parent/child relationship to create her feminist version of King Lear.

In the second chapter, I shift the focus from Lear to The Tempest. Miranda disobeys Prospero in order to pursue Ferdinand. Yet, Miranda's "rebellion" ultimately satisfies her father's will by securing a marriage with the prince. While Miranda clearly follows the formula of rebellion and subsequent acquiescence, I devote more analysis to the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. Not a parent/child association in the biological sense, the connection between master and slave in The Tempest proves particularly compelling. In the introduction to the play, Stephen Greenblatt argues that Shakespeare gives Caliban "a remarkable, unforgettable eloquence" (3053). No matter how "unforgettable" Caliban's articulacy may be, he remains a "thing of darkness" (5.1.278) as Prospero's slave and inferior throughout the drama.

Aimé Césaire's plot in A Tempest consistently parallels Shakespeare's The Tempest in many ways. Césaire's play begins with a shipwreck, includes the love story between Miranda and Ferdinand, and the conflict between Prospero and Antonio for the dukedom of Milan. However, Césaire makes significant alterations to the plot in his postcolonial retelling.

According to Judith Sarnecki, Césaire "takes this plot and distorts it, turns it inside out and stands the relationships in Shakespeare's [play] on their heads" (279). In A Tempest, the setting shifts from an island in the Mediterranean to one in the Caribbean, and Caliban becomes a black slave instead of a mutated creature. The most significant difference is Césaire's choice to privilege the plight of Caliban over Prospero's quest to reclaim his dukedom.

While Césaire's interpretation challenges the status quo, Walt Disney's appropriation of The Tempest in the animated film The Little Mermaid (1989) reaffirms the right of the patriarchy. In the third chapter, I argue that Ariel's rebellion against her father for the love of Prince Eric actually reinforces the order of the patriarchy as Ariel must leave the enchanted world "under the sea" to become a marriageable human. Yet, even more significant than Ariel's acceptance of the patriarchal order is the film's treatment of Ursula. The sea witch Ursula serves as a conflation of Sycorax and Caliban and represents "a puritan nightmare of the female sexual body" in Disney's world of animation (Finkelstein 189). Ursula is a "born devil" who exudes the sensual sins of gluttony and lust (The Tempest 4.1.188). In rendering Ursula a woman of excess, The Little Mermaid indicts not only powerful women but also characters like Caliban, who seek to live according to their own will as opposed to submitting to the "master's" way of life.

As Ursula and Caliban refuse to obey patriarchal power, Gloria Naylor similarly tackles the authority of Shakespeare in Mama Day. Instead of updating the plot of The Tempest, Naylor tailors elements of the play and weaves them into her own story. She virtually eliminates the patriarchy as strong women dominate the text. She also depicts the supernatural powers of Mama Day as positive, in a sense conflating the magic of Prospero with

that of Sycorax. In the fourth chapter, I argue that by supplanting the patriarchy with a matriarchal order and blurring the Shakespearean elements, Naylor's text becomes an orphan itself.

CHAPTER 2

REJECTING THE PATRIARCHY IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR AND JANE SMILEY'S A THOUSAND ACRES

Although many writers have retold the events involving the Lear (or Leir) family, the most famous account remains Shakespeare's play King Lear. Shakespeare's version of the story is the basis for Jane Smiley's reworking of the circumstances, A Thousand Acres. Smiley consistently remains true to the plot set up in Shakespeare's play, but she fills in some very perplexing gaps with a feminist approach. Adrienne Rich's idea of re-vision -- "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entertaining an old text from a new critical direction" (167) -- is apparent as Smiley focuses on the "why" behind the actions of Goneril and Regan through her parallel characters Ginny and Rose. In Shakespeare's version, the sisters are simply evil by nature with sympathy going to Lear and Cordelia; however, Smiley portrays the situation differently. As victims of sexual abuse, Ginny and Rose have every right to be angry with their father while the Cordelia character, Caroline, is not a victim of the violation. Smiley carefully weaves the various sources for Ginny and Rose's hate for their father into the story through narrative. The Lear character, Larry Cook, is revealed to be an abusive tyrant through the voice of one of his victims, his oldest child Ginny. Ginny's voice reveals the hierarchy of the family in the farming community of Zebulon County, Iowa. In Smiley's telling, patriarchy is as strong a force in Iowa during the late 1970s as it is in Shakespeare's King Lear. The key variants in the stories reside in the roles of women and the perspectives from which these stories are told, producing drastically different effects of rejecting the patriarchy.

An extremely important detail dealt with differently in each version is the role of the mother. The mother in Shakespeare's version is only alluded to, but by viewing her absence as a palpable presence in the play as Coppélia Kahn suggests, the importance of the mother in King Lear is comparable to its significance in A Thousand Acres. The mother is specifically referred to once in Shakespeare's play, and "then in the context of adultery" (Kahn 43). In Kahn's "The Absent Mother in King Lear," she suggests this passing reference to the mother implies that "Lear alone as progenitor endowed [his daughters] with their moral nature, and second, that if that nature isn't good, [they] had some other father" (43). Discrediting the role of the mother in childbearing, Kahn finds King Lear to be "a tragedy of masculinity" by failing to repress "the vulnerability, dependency, and capacity for feeling which are called 'feminine'" (36) in a patriarchal society. Kahn's article also points out Lear's desire to be mothered by his daughters. According to Kahn, he "wants two mutually exclusive things at once: to have absolute control over those closest to him and to be absolutely dependent on them" (40). This conflict leads to Lear's disgust and fear of the feminine as embodied by the actions of Goneril and Regan. After confronting the evil of his eldest children, his good daughter Cordelia, in a sense, becomes his mother. She has returned from France in hopes of reclaiming her father's land and crown, and she takes care of the feeble Lear, nurturing both his physical body and his ego. In the end, Kahn concludes "Cordelia's death prevents Lear from trying to live out his fantasy, and perhaps discover [...] that a daughter cannot be a mother" (49). By viewing the absence of the mother as a presence, the mother's role tragically shapes Lear's patriarchal treatment and expectations of his daughters.

Smiley's update of the Lear story heavily uses the importance of the mother's role instead of creating an absence that must be psychoanalyzed. One of the most important ingredients in Smiley's recipe for hate is the role of the Cook family mother. In Shakespeare's play, the role of the mother is barely mentioned, but the case in A Thousand Acres is quite different. The mother is definitely a character in the book; although dead, her presence is much more explicit than in Shakespeare's version. Ginny, Rose, and Caroline are young when their mother dies, and their memories of her range from foggy in the case of Ginny and Rose to nonexistent for Caroline. The memories Ginny relates in her narrative include her father as well, making Kahn's argument relevant to Smiley's account. She remembers losing a shoe at a party once and her mother pointing it out when she returns home. Her father goes into a rage, and Ginny hides behind the oven in the kitchen. Her mother begs Larry not to beat Ginny, but he commands his wife to summon their child out into the room. Ginny hears in horror as her mother betrays her and calls for her to come out and take her beating. Through this powerful scene and numerous others, Ginny shows how submissive and dependent her mother was to the patriarchal order of the family.

Another important detail about the mother in Smiley's retelling concerns her past. As children, Ginny and Rose played with their mother's old clothes in her closet. The girls imagined what their mother's life must have been like through the items they found in her bureau: "Although her present was measured out in aprons - she put a clean one on everyday - her youth included tight skirts and full skirts and gored skirts [...] a catalog of fashion" (Smiley 224). Ginny muses over these things that seem out of place for an Iowa farm wife as she struggles with her childhood memories. In addition to her

fashionable clothing, the mother was also concerned about Ginny's future. Ginny discovers her mother's confidence to a friend prior to her death in which she expressed her hope for Ginny to "go to college [...] to [see] some other places and [try] some other things" before marriage (91). Yet Larry, the patriarch, denies Ginny her mother's wish by instilling the concept of male dominance into his children and continuing the cycle of female submission.

In addition to elaborating on the Cook family mother, Smiley also delves deeply into the relationship among the sisters. The sororal dynamic is almost nonexistent in Shakespeare's version; the only exchange between all of Shakespeare's "sister" characters is after Cordelia's banishment by Lear. Cordelia censures Goneril and Regan by claiming "I know you what you are / And like a sister am most loath to call / Your faults as they are named" (1.1.266-8). Regan swiftly counters her youngest sister's condemnation by asserting "prescribe not us our duty" (1.1.273). However, Cordelia correctly predicts the "pleated cunning" (Shakespeare 1.1.278) that her sisters will commit against their father. After Cordelia leaves, Goneril notes "what poor judgment" (1.1.286) Lear is showing by disowning his favorite child. In King Lear, the contact between Cordelia and her sisters ends after this scene, while the relationship between Goneril and Regan continues to deteriorate throughout the play. The two eldest daughters initially present a united front against the demands of their father by symbolically holding hands in front of an irate Lear. However, their bond progressively deteriorates as both vie for the affections of Edmond, culminating in a fatal cat fight.

In Smiley's account, the situation with the sisters is quite different. Caroline is also the favored daughter and has

been protected from Larry by Ginny and Rose, but she does not realize the sacrifices her sisters have made on her behalf. Sarah Aguiar notes that "only the youngest, Caroline, has managed to escape[...]due in large part to Ginny and Rose's mothering of her and sheltering of her from their father's all-consuming influence" (202). She leaves the farm for the city and becomes a lawyer. After she expresses her doubts about Larry's incorporation plan, which would divide the family farm equally among the sisters, he slams the door in Caroline's face, echoing the banishment scene in King Lear. Ginny tries to talk to Caroline a couple of weeks after this slight, but she hangs up the phone on her older sister. Ginny makes another attempt to explain her position to Caroline, but she refuses to entertain Ginny's opinion. Later, when Larry tries to get the farm back, Caroline rushes to his defense by filling the role of "mother"; in other words, she automatically stands against her sisters, betraying the sororal bond. While the sacrifices made by Ginny and Rose for their younger sister are unknown to Caroline, her immediate disloyalty supports the patriarchy instead of sisterhood.

The relationships between the daughters and their husbands are also examined more closely in Smiley's novel, specifically Ginny's marriage. Early in the story, Ginny praises her husband Ty as being "well spoken and easy to get along with" instead of extolling their passionate love for one another (12). In fact, Ginny later concedes their sex life is less than thrilling until they make love while she thinks of the Edmund character, Jess. She compares herself to "a sow [longing] to wallow [...] and be engulfed" (162). Caroline Cakebread views Ginny's body like the sow's - as both "caged up and commodified" by men (95). The next day, Ginny temporarily frees her body by fulfilling her sexual desire for Jess, but she immediately feels awkward by her

nakedness in front of him, making her body "a symbolic site of oppression" (Cakebread 96). After they have sex in a "pickup bed in the dump," Ginny realizes that she "[hasn't] slept with men; [she's] slept with Ty" (Smiley 162, 163). As suggested by Barbara Mathieson, this recognition of her "sterile sex life" (139) changes her relationship with Ty considerably. She becomes "more decisive and [makes] rules" (Smiley 154) which Ty views disapprovingly. Their marriage continues to deteriorate until the night of the storm. Like Albany in King Lear, Ty is the patriarch's favored son-in-law. He is agreeable and avoids confrontations with Larry. The final blow to Ginny's marriage occurs when Ty does not stand up for her on the night of the storm. Ty's silence after Larry curses Ginny as a "dried-up whore bitch" (Smiley 181) confirms his loyalty to the patriarch, and his failure to defend her unofficially ends their relationship.

In addition to breaking the fissure in Ginny's marriage, Larry's curse on her is also very similar to Lear's on Goneril. Lear beseeches the gods to "dry up in her the organs of increase, and from her derogate body never spring a babe to honour her" (1.4.241-3). Lear also blames Goneril for the "hot tears" that "shake his manhood" (1.4.260-1). Moreover, Lear implores the heavens to "touch [him] with noble anger, / And let not women's weapons, water-drops, / Stain [his] man's cheeks" (2.2.442-4) as he wrestles with his loss of power. Lear's negative association of tears with femininity further displays his misogyny. As he begins his descent into madness, Lear cries, "O how this mother swells up toward my heart" (2.2.225), explicitly defining hysteria as female. Like Lear, Larry Cook conveys his disgust and fear of the feminine by attacking the ability to procreate. In King Lear, Goneril does not have any children; in Smiley's version, Ginny has had numerous

miscarriages due to fertilizer drainage in the drinking water. Ginny later deduces that her mother's cancer and Rose's terminal breast cancer were also products of the poisoned water supply. James Schiff parallels the patriarchal treatment of the land as analogous to the treatment of women:

Like the female body, the land has existed as something for men to control, possess, violate, and exploit. Larry Cook's nighttime excursions into his daughters' beds parallel the gradual taking and accumulation of his neighbors' land [...] He views his daughters, like the land, as his. Mother Earth or daughters Ginny and Rose, all are feminine bodies for him to assert his will over and to bury his seed within. (379)

As Larry's possessions, Ginny and Rose are victims of both the patriarch's literal rape of their bodies and of his rape of the land.

David Brauner describes "the world of A Thousand Acres [as] one of secrecy" (656). Throughout the novel, the female characters consistently remain silent as the men encourage the status quo. Brauner accurately surmises the role of silence by paralleling the role of speech in King Lear with its place in the novel: "just as Cordelia, in the opening scene of Lear, is damned if she speaks, and damned if she does not, so in A Thousand Acres the price of speech is at times as high as that of silence" (657). Caught in the middle of this lose-lose situation is Ginny. After arguing with her father in the local diner, Ginny realizes that "when [her] father asserts[s] his point of view, [hers] vanishes[s]" (190). Mary Carden posits that "if [Ginny] is to maintain her place on the fatherland [...] she must accept as natural [a] boundary of speakable and unspeakable, must act as a participant in her own silencing"

(187). Public opinion dictates a great part of Ginny's "silencing." For example, while objecting to her father's demand that she wait for him in the car on a smoldering summer day, Ginny notices the chiropractor's receptionist, a reputed town gossip, watching the dispute. The presence of an observer compels Ginny to "get back in the car" as she "hate[s] to think about how people feel about [her family]" (187). Whether under the watchful gaze of a neighbor or the sway of Larry's presence, Ginny strives to be a "dutiful 'girl'" (Carden 194) by adhering to the patriarchal authority, which "is not merely misogynistic, not merely a way of keeping women in their place: it is a system of mental and physical abuse" in the novel (Brauner 663).

The key difference between the two stories is that Smiley's account is a feminist revision. Through the medium of the novel, "the social structure [that] works to maintain and preserve patriarchy at the expense of casting out or slighting the daughters" (Schiff 373) is called into question. Smiley uses a very interesting technique to accomplish this goal. Brauner posits that "if patriarchy in this novel is predicated on secrecy, Smiley proposes a feminocentric alternative, based on the telling and sharing of stories" (665). In King Lear, readers generally sympathize with Lear and his "good" daughter, Cordelia; in A Thousand Acres, the community in Zebulon County does the same by considering Ginny and Rose land-hungry, "a pair of bitches" (Smiley 218). The primary difference lies in the voice of the respective accounts; Shakespeare's is a play, but Smiley allows the narrative to be told from Ginny's perspective. Iska Alter asserts "that Smiley chooses narrative as the method and the novel as the instrument to articulate her transformed, female-centered version of the Shakespearean original" (145). This is incredibly important because readers see that the reaction of the community is the same as their reaction to the

circumstances in King Lear. By seeing the situation through the eyes of Ginny, Smiley forces readers to rethink their reaction to King Lear and join her in wondering if "Goneril and Regan [get] the short end of the stick" after all (372).

In addition to discussing her reaction to the characters in King Lear, Smiley also suggests "narrative [...] always calls into question the validity of appearance" (55) in her essay on the novel, "Shakespeare in Iceland." Ginny's narrative does this by portraying her father as a controlling and tyrannical man, "a man who cannot be pleased but must be pleased" (Carden 188). In the farm community, Larry is respected, but Ginny knows the darker side of her father. In her remembrances of the past, she recalls physical abuse in the form of lashings with a belt. Eventually, Rose reminds her of the sexual abuse that she has repressed. This is Smiley's answer, her justification for Goneril and Regan's treatment of Lear. As survivors of incest, Smiley suggests that Ginny and Rose deserve retribution. In an interesting addition that is not in King Lear, Rose has had two daughters of her own. As the novel ends, Rose dies from the ravages of cancer attributed to the contaminated drinking water. This leaves her two children in a situation similar to the one she and Ginny experienced. Rose's daughters are now motherless, but the farm is left to Ginny and Caroline because Rose does not "want it to come to [her girls]. [She] wants all of [the suffering] to stop with [her] generation" (Smiley 353); thus, they do not fall victim to incest the way their mother and aunt did, lending a glimmer of hope to the otherwise bleak ending of Smiley's novel.

Taken as a whole, King Lear and A Thousand Acres share many of the same elements in their focus on family dynamics. They both emphasize the importance of land inheritance, and the plots of both works are generally comparable. Also, Shakespeare and

Smiley use the structure of the patriarchal family unit as the foundation for their works. The stark contrast between the two stems from the perception of rejecting the patriarchy. In King Lear, Lear is "[m]ore sinned against than sinning" (3.2.59), but in A Thousand Acres, this claim belongs to Ginny. Shakespeare presents a man who has been incredibly wronged by his eldest daughters. They have deceived him by proclaiming to love him and have ultimately abolished all of his authority. Shakespeare offers no reason for the behavior of Goneril and Regan other than they are especially cruel and greedy; Smiley allows Ginny to describe the events surrounding the land transfer, revealing the patriarch as a monster who molested his daughters.

In the two interpretations, the family dynamics are strikingly similar considering the time difference between the respective settings. Readers are outraged at the behavior of Goneril and Regan, just as the farming community in Iowa is appalled at what they perceive to be the callous actions of Ginny and Rose. Even though Smiley's depiction of Ginny and Rose is much more sympathetic than Shakespeare's treatment of Goneril and Regan, both versions show the eldest daughters rejecting the rule of the patriarch. In King Lear, Goneril and Regan choose to stand against Lear, just as Ginny and Rose find the strength to rebuke the tyranny of Larry Cook in A Thousand Acres. The defining difference lies in the result of the rejection.

At the end of King Lear, the rebellious daughters are demonized as Lear lionizes the "good" daughter Cordelia for her return to his side. Goneril poisons Regan before taking her own life, while Cordelia becomes a martyr by dying for the rightful rule of her father. However, Smiley makes some important amendments to her novel's conclusion. Rebellious Rose loses her battle with breast cancer, in a sense poisoned by the

patriarchal manipulation of the land, while the acquiescent Caroline takes in Larry after the liquidation of the family farm. Ultimately, Ginny suffers through her father's abuse but is the only daughter who escapes the poison of the patriarch. In Shakespeare's telling, Lear experiences a sort of epiphany and realizes his error in casting out Cordelia at the end; but in Smiley's account, Ginny is the one who undergoes a life-altering change. Ginny leaves the farm for an apartment and waitressing job in Minnesota: the same type of life Rose imagined their mother might have led. After Rose dies, her daughters live with their aunt Ginny as she prepares to take night classes at the local college. Smiley's ending is bleak in terms of the destruction of the natural world as the farm is sold to a corporate land developer, but unlike Shakespeare's version, it is not tragic for all of the female characters. After the sale of the farm, Ginny remains in the city to raise her nieces. As both families are patriarchal and deeply connected to the land, Smiley's novel shows the resemblance between the family structure in Shakespeare's time and in modern American society; however, her feminist revision ultimately allows Ginny to find her own voice outside of the constraints of the male-dominated family, enabling her to establish a life of her own without patriarchal expectations or boundaries.

CHAPTER 3

ALL IN THE FAMILY: PROSPERO AS CALIBAN'S FATHER IN CÉSAIRE'S A TEMPEST

In The Tempest, Shakespeare gives Caliban many eloquent lines, creating sympathy for the "freckled whelp" (1.2.285). While some critics view Shakespeare's portrayal of Caliban as an ambiguous commentary on slavery/colonialism, Caliban ultimately remains Prospero's inferior at the close of Shakespeare's play. Aimé Césaire revises Shakespeare's Caliban in his postcolonial response to the bard's play, Une Tempête, or A Tempest. In Césaire's reworking of the circumstances, Prospero and his fellow Caucasians become satirized caricatures of Shakespeare's original cast, and Caliban becomes the central character of the drama. Césaire also creates an interesting dichotomy between Caliban and Ariel, an element completely absent from Shakespeare's play. Not a parent/child relationship in the biological sense, the connection between Prospero and Caliban, master and slave, proves particularly compelling in both Shakespeare's and Césaire's versions.

Césaire's plot in A Tempest consistently parallels Shakespeare's The Tempest in many ways. Césaire's play begins with a shipwreck, includes the love story between Miranda and Ferdinand, and resolves the conflict between Prospero and Antonio for the dukedom of Milan. However, Césaire makes significant alterations to the plot in his postcolonial retelling. According to Judith Sarnecki, Césaire "takes this plot and distorts it, turns it inside out and stands the relationships in Shakespeare's [play] on their heads" (279). In A Tempest, the setting shifts from an island in the Mediterranean to one in the Caribbean, and Caliban becomes a black slave instead of a mutated half-human. The two most significant differences are Césaire's choice to privilege the

plight of Caliban over Prospero's quest to reclaim his dukedom and the radically different ending.

Shakespeare's portrayal of Prospero paints the duke as the patriarchal paradigm of perfection. In The Tempest, Prospero appears as "the ideal father in Shakespeare" (Singh 51). Prospero has raised Miranda as a single parent and appears concerned with his only child's welfare. He also expresses affection for his daughter and respect for his presumably deceased wife. When Miranda poses the question, "Sir, are not you my father?" (1.2.55), Prospero confidently replies, "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and / She said thou wast my daughter" (1.2.56-7). Unlike Lear and several other Shakespearean patriarchs, Prospero compliments his former mate as virtuous (Orgel 50). Prospero also openly admits his love for his daughter and considers Miranda "a cherubin" in his moments of despair (1.2.152).

Although Prospero thinks of Miranda as angelic, she does "disobey" his authority. After seeing Ferdinand, Miranda immediately falls in love with the prince; he "is the third man that e'er [she] saw, the first / That e'er [she] sighed for" (1.2.449-50). Prospero envisions his daughter marrying Ferdinand; however, he initially feigns disapproval for the union. Prospero forbids Miranda from associating with Ferdinand, leading her to believe he objects to her feelings for the prince. In an aside, Prospero reveals "this swift business / I must uneasy make, lest too light winning / Make the prize light" (1.2.454-6). This statement suggests that Prospero makes the union between his daughter and Ferdinand difficult in order to protect his daughter's virtue, but it also suggests Miranda's value as her father's commodity. Sarup Singh explains that during the Renaissance, "loss of virginity was viewed by society as a total disaster" (53). Rachana Sachdew posits that

Prospero's "primary concern as a father is to maintain Miranda's virginity intact at all costs" (214). Sachdew's argument appears valid as Prospero ultimately "gives" an unblemished Miranda to Ferdinand in marriage.

In Césaire's version, Miranda is virtually absent from the play, but Ariel receives more consideration. Diana Brydon contends that the role of Miranda is lost in the "postcolonial readings of The Tempest that privilege the Prospero-Caliban dialectic" (165-6). Brydon's remark is accurate so far as Césaire's telling ignores Miranda; however, Césaire's reading does expand on the role of Ariel. In Césaire's version, Ariel is the obedient "child" of Prospero. If Caliban is to be seen as a Malcolm X-like character as suggested by Chantal Zabus, then "Ariel is more like Martin Luther King" (47). In Césaire's play, Ariel is a mulatto slave who collaborates with Prospero in order to earn his emancipation. In an element that is not present in Shakespeare's version, Caliban and Ariel debate in Césaire's retelling. Ariel tries to convince Caliban to join him in his peaceful road to freedom as they "are brothers, brothers in suffering and slavery" (2.1.14-5). Caliban censures Ariel for his "Uncle Tom patience" (2.1.29) in relation to Prospero. Ariel warns Caliban that Prospero is "stronger," but Caliban refuses to agree and argues that "death is better than humiliation and injustice" (2.1.83). Whereas Ariel wants Prospero "to acknowledge his own injustice" (2.1.55) and free the slaves with "no violence, no submission" (2.1.53) on the side of the oppressed, Caliban wishes "to have the last word" (2.1.84) no matter what the consequences.

Césaire retains Shakespeare's ending from The Tempest as the post-colonial Ariel also "earns" his freedom through compliance by obeying the will of Prospero. In Shakespeare's characterization, Ariel is Prospero's beloved "spirit," an

obedient servant. Ariel refers to Prospero as a "great master," a "noble master" throughout the play (1.2.190, 303). Yet Ariel does request "[his] liberty" (1.2.247) from Prospero.

Initially, Prospero is reluctant to grant Ariel's request; he reminds the nymph of "the foul witch Sycorax," who held Ariel prisoner on the island before he was rescued by Prospero (1.2.259). However, the master and servant strike a deal: Ariel will help Prospero reclaim his dukedom in exchange for freedom. Shakespeare's just Prospero remains true to his word and frees Ariel after recovering his title.

Césaire's characterization of Prospero's will serves as a complete departure from Shakespeare's depiction of the duke. In A Tempest, Prospero's only concern is satisfying his own needs. He does not express any genuine affection for Miranda, nor does he show any compassion for Ariel or Caliban. Instead, Césaire's Prospero insists on extolling his own virtues, specifically in relation to Caliban. Prospero claims Caliban is "a beast [he] educated, trained, dragged up from bestiality" (14); however, Caliban begs to differ. Caliban claims that Prospero "didn't teach [him] a thing! Except to jabber in [Prospero's] language so that [Caliban] could understand [his] orders" (14). Caliban also accuses Prospero of "think[ing] the earth itself is dead," expressing a common conception of Eurocentric colonialism. In addition to lying as well as abusing the natural world, Caliban also censures Prospero for stealing his name. Caliban rejects the appellation given to him by Prospero, claiming "it's the name given me by hatred, and every time it's spoken it's an insult" (18). Prospero suggests some "historical names" that seem appropriate, but Caliban refuses the legitimacy of Prospero's suggestions, positing that Prospero's history has left him "a man whose name has been stolen" (18).

Throughout Césaire's telling, language plays an integral role for Caliban as it represents both his native culture and that of Prospero. Caliban continuously uses the oppressor's language (i.e. Prospero's) against him, while also retaining his native language/culture. Césaire plays with the words of Shakespeare's Caliban, specifically "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-7). Those lines from The Tempest serve as one of the key differences between the original play and the postcolonial retelling. Césaire's Caliban knows how to curse as well as Shakespeare's, but he also knows how to win his freedom without losing his cultural identity by using language.

Caliban's sense of identity in A Tempest is strongly connected to his emerging black pride. In Discourse on Colonialism, published nineteen years before A Tempest, Césaire defines Négritude as "a concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness [...] of the black man [...] [in which] Negro heritage [is] worthy of respect" (76). In formulating the concept of Négritude, Césaire's perception of colonization, specifically French colonization, becomes clear. In Discourse on Colonialism, Césaire argues that:

between colonization and civilization, there is an infinite distance; that out of all colonial expeditions that have been undertaken, out of all the colonial statutes that have been drawn up, out of all the memoranda that have been dispatched by all the ministries, there could not come a single human value. (11-2)

The methods of French colonization are at the core of Césaire's condemnation. Césaire's chief complaint concerns the French "politics of assimilation" (72). In Les Français, Jean-François Brière describes French colonization as a mission to civilize

the animal energies and replace those bad qualities with discipline, harmony, and spirituality in the indigenous people. Césaire's claim that "the ideal was to turn [the African] into a Frenchman with black skin" (73) captures the essence of the French conception of viewing colonization as a means of spreading their civilization and culture, which is reflective in Prospero's disgust of Caliban. Ultimately, for the French, language is not merely a means of communication, but it also represents cultural identity.

Language as cultural identity sets up a defining difference between Shakespeare's The Tempest and Césaire's A Tempest. In The Tempest, language plays an important role but does not represent culture in the French-influenced sense that Césaire challenges. The exchanges between Shakespeare's Prospero and Caliban illustrate the respective social positions of both; Prospero is master, while Caliban is slave. In the introduction to the play, Stephen Greenblatt argues that Shakespeare gives Caliban "a remarkable, unforgettable eloquence" (3053). No matter how "unforgettable" Caliban's articulacy may be, he remains Prospero's slave and inferior throughout the drama.

Shakespeare's Caliban also conforms to the master "father's" tongue. Throughout the play, Caliban speaks in verse using Prospero's language to lament his plight. While Caliban curses Prospero and wishes him dead, he "must obey," because Prospero's "art is of such power" (1.2.375). In hopes of escaping slavery, Caliban begins to repeat the same mistake he made with Prospero by revealing "every fertile inch [of the] island" (2.2.140) when he asks Stefano to "be [his] god" (2.2.141). Ultimately, the "dull fool" (5.1.301) Stefano is no match for Prospero's magic; however, Caliban grovels for Prospero's forgiveness. Prospero magnanimously announces, "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.277-8) after

preventing Caliban's revolt. Caliban pledges to "seek for grace" from Prospero for being a "thrice-double ass" (5.1.299) in taking Stefano as a god over the true master, Prospero. Although Caliban says, "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-7) in the beginning, he accepts Prospero's cultural authority by the end of the play and is thankful for the "freedom" Prospero gives him as he quietly exits the harmonious scene.

While Shakespeare's Caliban conforms to the mores of Prospero's "civilization," Césaire's Caliban refuses to abandon his own customs for those of the oppressor. According to Zabus, Caliban is "the insurgent, the cause of the tempest in Césaire's play" (45). Caliban's first line in the play is "Uhuru," (1.2.87) which means "freedom" in Swahili. In addition to the meaning of the word, this line is extremely significant because it clearly aligns Caliban with his African roots, not with the Eurocentric world of Prospero. The first exchange between Caliban and Prospero is particularly important as it ends with the same word as it begins, "Uhuru" (1.2.209).

Caliban counters all of Prospero's threats and accusations and challenges his "master" as well. At the close of this first exchange, Caliban demands that Prospero call him "X...like a man without a name" (1.2.204). Zabus points out the clear association between Caliban's demand and the "Afro-American practice of identifying oneself as 'X,' after the Black Panthers, Malcolm X, and the 1960s U.S. Black Muslim movement" (47). Laurence Porter finds that Césaire's play presents four strategies for the slaves: "collaboration, opposition, resistance, and separatism" (373). After the first exchange between Caliban and Prospero, Caliban's course of action appears to be resistance and separatism, supporting Zabus's aligning of Caliban with Malcolm X.

Ariel and Caliban's respective approaches to freedom produce radically different results. The ending for Césaire's Caliban is quite different from Shakespeare's. In The Tempest, Prospero is eager to return to Milan for the marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand, and while he does not explicitly grant Caliban his freedom, Prospero's departure realistically ends the master/slave dynamic. In Césaire's version, Prospero chooses to remain on the island because Caliban "makes [him] doubt [himself]" (3.5.357); in other words, Caliban's refusal to accept his dominion compels him to stay. James Robinson contends that Prospero's decision to remain on the island is a necessity, because the "colonizer [has become] bound to the colonized" (441). Prospero's arrogance is manifest in his explanation to stay: "this isle is mute without me" (3.5.370), suggesting his complete preeminence over Caliban. Caliban accuses Prospero of "imposing on [him] an image: underdeveloped, in [Prospero's] words" (3.5.297-8). Caliban goes on to reject Prospero's image as erroneous and proclaims that "one day [his] bare fist, just that, will be enough to crush [Prospero's] world [because] the old world is falling apart" (3.5.302-4).

While Prospero chooses to remain on the island in Césaire's version, Caliban wins his freedom in a more meaningful sense than in Shakespeare's version. Shakespeare's Caliban basically concedes to Prospero's superiority, but Césaire's Caliban refuses to accept his oppressor's unjust authority and remains true to himself and his own traditions. As in The Tempest, Prospero gets the last official lines, but those lines are radically different. Instead of appearing as a benevolent "father," Césaire's Prospero beckons Caliban in vain to chop his wood and build his fire. The last action of the play is Caliban's song "FREEDOM HI-DAY, FREEDOM HI-DAY." Even though Prospero remains on the island, Caliban has chosen the path of

separatism and thus emancipated himself from the untenable shackles of slavery.

While Caliban's choice to remove himself from Prospero's realm in order to reclaim his freedom is not perfect, it does protect his sense of cultural identity in the face of Prospero's quest to control and tame the island. In Discourse on Colonialism, Césaire continually emphasizes the importance of a black identity, and Caliban embraces his identity and heritage over the course of the play. His self-knowledge allows him to recover his independence by rejecting the professed superiority of his white father Prospero, even as the oppressor remains on the island.

The role of language in Caliban's recovery of freedom is extremely pertinent, especially in terms of Césaire's audience. Essentially, Césaire is "writing back" to the French and white, patriarchal society as represented by Shakespeare. Laurence Porter suggests that Césaire chooses Shakespeare's play with the intent to show "that no corner of white culture should be immune to skeptical scrutiny" (362). Shakespeare's play also serves as an appropriate choice because it presents Caliban in an ambiguous light. Doug Lanier suggests that "with its references to the ghetto and Malcolm X, Césaire's adaptation resituates Shakespeare's play within the contemporary aftermath of the colonialism Shakespeare seems to endorse" (47). However, according to Edward Said, "Orientalism respond[s] [...] to the culture that produced it" (2008). Thus more than "writing back" to Shakespeare, Césaire critiques the French sense of culture and colonization. In Discourse on Colonialism, Césaire does "not deny French influences" (67). Yet he consistently maintains that black culture, or any culture, should never be forcibly dissolved into another. Even though the freedom

regained by Césaire's Caliban may not be ideal, his culture ultimately survives because of it.

CHAPTER 4

FIGURING THE FEMININE AS FOUL: DISNEY'S USE OF MIRANDA AND CALIBAN

In Shakespeare's play The Tempest, Caliban serves as Prospero's chief antagonist throughout the drama. The enslaved Caliban desperately seeks to regain control of his native island from the reign of Prospero. While altering the dynamics of the situation between Caliban and Prospero, Disney also appropriates the master/slave relationship in the animated film The Little Mermaid (1989). Instead of simply using a Caliban-like character, Disney creates Ursula, a combination of "Caliban's absent mother, Sycorax, [...] with her son" (Finkelstein 186). In the Disney version, King Triton, the Prospero character, fights against the evil of the power-hungry Ursula. Triton's greatest battle against the sea witch also includes his daughter Ariel. In creating Ariel, Disney collapses Shakespeare's Miranda and Ariel into one character, Triton's youngest and brightest daughter. Ursula uses Ariel as a pawn in her quest to reclaim the underwater realm from Triton: an alteration that is a complete departure from the limited interactions between Shakespeare's Caliban, Miranda, and Ariel.

The Disney portrayal of Ursula also borrows heavily from the idea of Carnival, which Shakespeare often employed as well. Michael Bristol describes Carnival as "a time of hedonistic excess and transgression [...] [when] social order is literally turned upside down" (351). Ursula's voluptuous body and seemingly chaotic rule align her with the Carnival tradition. In the film, Ursula is a "born devil" who exudes the sensual sins of gluttony and lust (4.1.188). In rendering Ursula a manipulative woman of excess and Ariel a chaste maid of honor, The Little Mermaid indicts not only powerful women but also

characters like Caliban, who seek to live according to their own will as opposed to submitting to the "master's" way of life.

Disney's indictment of Ursula begins with their depiction of the Prospero character, King Triton. Just as Shakespeare colors Prospero as fair ruler and a devoted father, Disney similarly paints Triton as a well-rounded merman. Under Triton's fatherly rule, life under the sea flourishes beautifully around the merking's immaculate golden palace as evidenced by the collective harmony among merpeople, crustaceans, and fish in numerous musical sequences. Triton's world is one of beauty, and the principal signifier of that beauty is the mermaid princess Ariel. Triton appears devoted to all of his daughters, but like Cordelia in King Lear, the youngest is the father's favorite. Triton notices Ariel's dreamy oblivion after she misses her premiere musical performance in front of the whole kingdom, a sort of aquatic debutante ball for the princess. Triton initially expresses anger over Ariel's oversight, but his furor begins to fade when he discovers the reason for her absentminded behavior: his youngest daughter is in love. The merking giddily tries to guess "who the lucky merman could be" as he appears pleased with his daughter's maturation.

Triton's initial pleasure with Ariel's emerging maturity soon subsides when he discovers the object of her affection is a human. In much the same vein as Prospero views Caliban's culture as heathen, Triton considers humans to be "fish-eating barbarians." In commenting on the role of the father during the Renaissance, Valerie Traub explains that "the father was likened to the ruler of the realm, and a well-ordered household was supposed to run like a well-ordered state" (129). Not only is Triton Ariel's father, but he is also the ruler of the underwater realm. With unquestionable authority, the merking

forbids Ariel from having contact with the barbarity of the human world after he destroys her prized collection of shipwreck memorabilia. In this powerful scene of destruction, the line "between 'foul witch' and princely magician" appears blurry as Triton uses his powers to obliterate his daughter's treasure trove (Greenblatt 3049). Shortly after Triton's confrontation with his daughter, Ursula deploys her "babies," two trusty eels, to lure the princess into her web of deception to reclaim the rule of the sea.

In Ursula's quest to usurp Triton, she continually employs "black" magic to ruthlessly attain her goals. Ursula has lured many "poor, unfortunate souls" of the merworld into her dangerous lair with promises of improving their lives. While Ursula temporarily grants the wishes of the desperate merfolk, her services are far from being free. The price for not paying the sea witch in a timely manner carries serious ramifications. Ursula ultimately transforms the debtors into deformed, moaning weeds in her grotesque "little garden." Richard Finkelstein describes Ursula's crypt as womb-like and her prisoners as sperm. In a sense, Finkelstein's argument suggests Ursula serves as the only maternal figure in The Little Mermaid; however, the sea witch's brand of parenting requires "her 'children' to regress, even to the point of returning to the womb" (192).

As the only female mother figure in the film, Ursula realizes that Ariel's aspirations "may be the key to Triton's undoing." Like Shakespeare's Sycorax, Ursula is also famous "for mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible" (1.2.266). In an act of desperation, Ariel looks to Ursula for help in realizing her dream of becoming human. Ariel, like Miranda, has fallen in love at first sight. After rescuing Prince Eric from the shipwreck, Ariel can think of nothing or no one but the

prince. As when Miranda first sees Ferdinand, Ariel considers Eric "a thing divine, for nothing natural / [...] ever saw she so noble" (1.2.423-4). Eric is also smitten, although he does not remember Ariel's face, only her voice. Disney chooses to conflate aspects of Shakespeare's Miranda with characteristics of Prospero's spirit, Ariel, in creating their heroine. In The Tempest, it is Ariel's song that "allay[s] both [the water's] fury and [Ferdinand's] passion / with its sweet air" (1.2.396-7); similarly, Disney appropriates the spirit's gift of song for their mermaid princess with a parallel effect on the prince.

In a lovesick haze, Ariel swims straight into Ursula's den. As Ursula plots against Triton, Ariel seeks to escape life "under the sea" to win Eric's love. In commenting on the basis for Ursula and Ariel, Lemuel Johnson suggests that Miranda and Caliban are kindred spirits in their respective relationships with Prospero in Shakespeare's play. Although Miranda is not physically abused by her father as Caliban is, her physical body does belong to the duke. While Johnson's suggestion of a "potential alliance between Miranda and Caliban" is unclear considering the derogatory comments Miranda directs toward Caliban (21), there is a direct correlation to Ariel's deal with Ursula; the sea witch gives Ariel what she wants (i.e. to become human) in exchange for the mermaid's captivating voice. Yet Ursula ultimately tries to sabotage Ariel's quest for love, destroying the potential for a partnership between the two female characters.

Realistically, the possibility of an alliance between Ariel and Ursula is as hopeless as a partnership between Miranda and Caliban but for different reasons. In The Little Mermaid, the sea witch desires total power, whereas Caliban simply wants to recover his mother's island. While Caliban's attempt "to violate / The honor of [Miranda]" has failed (1.2.350-1), Ursula

proves successful in her assault on Ariel. Ursula's eels appear to molest the mermaid as they slink seductively around Ariel's body while trying to lure the youth to their master's cavern. Once at Ursula's den, the mock molestation continues as the eels slither around the princess. While not literally trying to rape the mermaid, Ursula exerts her power by penetrating Ariel's mouth with a beam of black magic to extract the princess's most prized possession, her enchanting voice. In discussing Shakespeare's play, Valerie Traub argues that Caliban's "attempted rape of Miranda is used to legitimize slavery" as it shows the slave to be inhumane (140); this comment also applies to Disney's film and its audience as Ursula appears deserving of punishment for her abuse of Ariel.

Ursula's lust for power appears most prevalent after she gains control of Triton and the sea. Just as Prospero's power resides in his books, Triton's rule lies in his crown and scepter. Once Ursula acquires possession of these royal articles, her already fleshy body inflates to gigantic proportions. Finkelstein argues that Disney transforms Ursula's body in an attempt to censure female sexuality and power by "show[ing] only the negative side of female rule" (137). In fact,

Youth and patriarchy are reconciled only after the inflation and explosion of Ursula's body during the final battle. Not until Ursula's body, and the female sexual energies it signifies, are gone can Ariel successfully join Eric's class-inflected patriarchy.

(187)

By choosing to juxtapose Ursula's ambitious sexuality beside the wholesome innocence of Ariel, Disney condemns female empowerment as fundamentally iniquitous.

Inside the constraints of the controlling culture, both Caliban's and Ursula's physical appearances mirror their statuses as outsiders. The society of Prospero rejects Caliban because he is "not honoured with a human shape" (1.2.285-6). Caliban appears as half monster, half human before Prospero and Miranda. Prospero and Miranda continually remind Caliban that he is a slave because he is "hag-born" and of a "vile race" (1.2.285-361). While the Norton Shakespeare translates "vile race" as "hereditary nature," Aimé Césaire views the phrase as decidedly ethnocentric and analogous to the European justification for "laying down the dishonest equation that colonization equals civilization" (11). As a result of Prospero's sense of civilization, Caliban is forced to assimilate the culture of his oppressor in the bondage of slavery.

Like Caliban, Ursula is "not honoured with a human shape" (1.2.285-6); instead, she is an ample octopus in a world dominated by beautiful merpeople. While the problems Ursula's form creates are comparable to Caliban's, Disney also borrows from the idea of Carnival in creating the sea witch. In the "topsy-turvy world of Carnival, [...] rules are temporarily displaced and the body's pleasures are celebrated" (Howard 1154). As Ursula gyrates her swollen hips and breasts while plotting against King Triton, she serves as "a puritan nightmare of the female sexual body" (Finkelstein 189). Ursula's husky voice and forward manner also suggest the Renaissance fear of inversion, which held that:

Men and women had the same anatomical structures; women were simply less perfect than men, there having been less heat present when they were conceived. This meant, among other things, that women's genitalia were just like a man's - with the vagina and ovaries

corresponding to the penis and scrotum - except that they had not been pushed outside the body as a man's had been. Because male-female difference was therefore less grounded in ideas of absolute bodily difference than is typical today, much emphasis was placed on behavioral differences and on distinctions of dress. (Howard 1595)

While Ursula's voluptuousness is decidedly female, if not feminine, her manner is thoroughly masculine, posing a threat to patriarchal order in and of itself. In fact, Ursula reveals that she has "lived in the palace" but was "banished and exiled" from power presumably by Triton, although the merking never uses his powers against her as Prospero does with Caliban. During the entirety of the film, Ursula schemes and connives in hopes of regaining control of the sea, a distinctly masculine design.

Even though Caliban and Ursula share mutated physical forms and endure exile, Caliban is a much more sympathetic character than Ursula. Prospero has tricked him out of his home and into slavery by a "celestial liquor" (2.2.109) of "water with berries in 't" (1.2.337). Granted Shakespeare's portrayal of Caliban is not flattering, he has attempted to rape Miranda and is tricked by the likes of Trinculo and Stefano, but he does possess "a remarkable, unforgettable eloquence" (Greenblatt 3053). This "eloquence" is apparent in his retort to Miranda concerning learning to speak (i.e. "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-7)) and in his advice to Trinculo and Stefano to secure Prospero's books (i.e. "Remember / First to possess his books, for without them / He's but a sot" (3.2.86-88)). Through the abuse he suffers, Caliban's actions almost appear justifiable.

More than eloquence, Ursula has presence in The Little Mermaid. Ursula is a "feminized 'other' whose evil is not

essential [...] but culturally constructed" (Finkelstein 193), making it difficult for viewers to sympathize with her. Yet the character of Ursula walks, or rather swims, a fine line between Disney's strictly coded gender roles of male and female. In a sense, Ursula wants the same thing as the male characters: generally, to control the natural world and specifically, to control Ariel. Even the performer who "voices" Ursula makes the distinction between male and female ambiguous with her raspy gin and cigarettes intonations. Ultimately, Disney creates a very powerful character who ruthlessly seeks what she wants. Unlike Caliban, Ursula is no one's slave to be abused. She has lost the kingdom to Triton; but unlike Prospero, the merking does not use his magic against the outsider. Essentially, Ursula appears purely vengeful as she devises a scheme to overthrow King Triton.

By choosing to create a female Caliban, Disney champions the validity of the patriarchy and denies a post-colonial reading of The Tempest. In discussing The Tempest, Janet Adelman finds that Shakespeare's treatment of Sycorax as a "damned witch" leaves little room for reader sympathy (1.2.265). Instead, by presenting Sycorax as the only mother figure, the play "rename[s] [maternal presence] a witch and exorcise[s] it in order to found its masculine authority in the excision of the female" (194). Adelman goes on to argue that Shakespeare's play "reinstate[s] the image of absolute paternal authority only by exorcising the witch-mother" (194). Clearly, Ursula represents "the witch-mother" in Disney's film as she is simply evil in her lust for power, while Triton is just and fair in his patriarchal rule of the sea and in his treatment of Ariel. As Ariel tries to get what she wants on her own terms and fails in her attempt to disobey the patriarchy, she finds that Father really does know best as only "discipline, hard work, and purity of voice

bring a man" (Finkelstein 186). By the end of the film, Triton regains control of his kingdom as he grants Ariel's wish to become human and gives his youngest daughter away in marriage to Prince Eric. The film simply ignores Caliban, and Ursula is vile and gets what she deserves by the closing scenes. Ultimately, in its use of Shakespeare's The Tempest and its portrayal of Ariel and Ursula, Disney not only indicts female power and sexuality but individualism as well.

CHAPTER 5

RESTORING MATRIARCHAL ORDER: GLORIA NAYLOR'S SHAKESPEAREAN SIGNIFICATION IN MAMA DAY

In defining the Other, Simone de Beauvoir argues that "being different from man, who sets himself up as the same, it is naturally to the category of the Other that woman is consigned" by the patriarchal world (69). Borrowing from this feminist idea, Edward Said claims that the white patriarchal western world defines itself by the difference represented by the East in much the same way men establish a contrasting identity through women. In addition to relegating women and minorities to the fringes of society as inferiors, patriarchal power also displaces the myths of the Great Mother/Goddess in favor of male deities. Valerie Traub discusses the dilemma African-American women writers face as they try "to negotiate a relationship to an Anglo-European language and tradition that doubly defines them as absence and lack - as black and as women" (151). In her novel Mama Day, Gloria Naylor addresses this problem as she seeks to restore a feminine order by using a "status-studded example of Anglo-European patriarchal culture," and the works of William Shakespeare serve as her template (Traub 152). Through her signification of Shakespeare's plays, specifically King Lear and The Tempest, Naylor supplants the cultural dominance of white, patriarchal Shakespeare with the black, matriarchal order of the female conjurer Mama Day.

Unlike Jane Smiley and Aimé Césaire, Naylor does not engage in a direct appropriation of Shakespearean characters in her novel. Most critics identify Mama Day as Naylor's version of Prospero; however, Mama Day's given name is Miranda, which is the name Shakespeare provides for Prospero's daughter. Likewise, it is difficult to establish whether Sapphira or Ruby represents Sycorax; whether George mirrors Ferdinand or Caliban;

and whether Cocoa behaves as Shakespeare's Miranda or Ophelia, her "real" name in the novel. While two of Naylor's main characters share the same names as Shakespearean women, both Miranda and Ophelia prefer pet names in the novel. Almost everyone in the Willow Springs community refers to Miranda as Mama Day and to Ophelia as Cocoa. Ultimately, the ambiguity of Naylor's usage signals the role of signification in the book. In discussing the word "signification" in Black and Standard English, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes the two-fold importance of the identical spelling. He posits that:

The signifier "Signification" has remained identical in spelling to its white counterpart to demonstrate, first that a simultaneous, but negated, parallel discursive universe exists within the larger white discursive universe [...]. It also seems apparent that retaining the identical signifier argues strongly that the most poignant level of black-white differences is that of meaning, of "signification" in the most literal sense. (49)

Gates' comment proves relevant in relation to Naylor's appropriation of Shakespeare and other traditionally "white" elements in her novel, especially her use of names. Traub finds that in the novel "every character has many names, drawn from both Anglo- and African-American heritages; each name carries its own history, and their stories are always in the process of being told" (160). In essence, Naylor's use of names from Shakespeare's plays does not necessarily denote a direct correlation between the predecessors and namesakes.

In addition to borrowing Shakespearean names, Naylor also challenges various traditionally opposed forces. For example, the relationship between George and Cocoa appears to set up a male/female opposition of gender roles in the novel that is also

present in many of Shakespeare's plays, including The Tempest. In the play, Miranda's chastity monopolizes Ferdinand's pragmatic interest, while Miranda considers Ferdinand "a thing divine" and sympathizes with his plight in pursuit of her love (1.2.423). From the beginning of the novel, Cocoa also exhibits feminine qualities such as intuition and emotion, whereas George displays more masculine characteristics like reason. However, Naylor does not simply present gender stereotypes; instead, she challenges traditionally held beliefs. In a pivotal sequence of events, Cocoa and George have a major dispute before his annual football trip in which Cocoa calls George "a pompous, snide, uptight son-of-a-bitch" (128). During his trip, George decides to propose to Cocoa; however, after his return home, he watches as she exits the apartment building of her former lover. Instead of proposing, George explains "why [he doesn't] like being called the son of a bitch" (130). He tells Cocoa about his past: his mother was a prostitute and his father "was one of her customers" (131). He surmises that he does not "have all the pieces. But there are enough of them to lead [him] to believe that [his mother] was not a bitch" (131). After George finishes his story, Cocoa asks him to marry her, reversing the tradition of the man proposing to the woman. While Prospero gives his virgin daughter away in marriage to Ferdinand to "make [...] / The Queen of Naples" (1.2.453-4), a mature and experienced Cocoa suggests the matrimonial union with George.

Another apparent opposition in the novel occurs between the rural island Willow Springs and the urban metropolis New York City, appearing to reflect the disparity Shakespeare creates between Caliban's island and Prospero's Milan. Cocoa grew up on the secluded southern island just as George has always called New York "home." Despite the apparent contrast between the two settings, Gary Storhoff perceptively notes that New York City is

an island like Willow Springs, leading him to posit that "Manhattan is not the antithesis of Willow Springs but [rather] its complement" (38). As a native, George sees New York as:

A network of small towns, some even smaller than here in Willow Springs. It could be one apartment building, a handful of blocks, a single square mile hidden off with its own language, newspapers, and magazines - its own laws and codes of behavior, and sometimes even its own judge and juries [...] To live in New York you'd have to know about the florist on Jamaica Avenue who carried yellow roses even though they didn't move well, but it was his dead wife's favorite color [...] [Cocoa's] crowd would never know about the sweetness that bit at the back of your throat from the baklava at those dark bakeries in Astoria or from walking past a synagogue on Fort Washington Avenue and hearing a cantor sing. (61)

George displays an acute eye for detail with his thoughtful appreciation for the "small towns" and people of his city, and he proceeds to share these "secrets" with Cocoa, in a sense, showing her how his island is a lot like hers. However, Shakespeare presents no relatedness between Prospero's world and Caliban's as Naylor reveals in her treatment of the urban and the rural.

In addition to challenging stereotypes, Naylor also questions interpretations of Shakespeare's "well-wrought urn," King Lear, when her characters discuss the play. One of Cocoa and George's first dates centers on the dark tragedy. George views the play primarily through the role of Edmond. The story of Gloucester's illegitimate child has "a special poignancy for [George], reading about the rage of a bastard son, [his] own father having disappeared long before [he] was born" (106).

Cocoa also identifies with Edmond as her father abandoned her family before her birth. Traub contends that "their mutual identification with the Shakespearean bastard dissolves their personal differences, and a unified aesthetic response literally leads to a sexual union" (158). Traub's comment appears valid as Cocoa and George consummate their relationship after a lively discussion of the play. Even though both characters choose to privilege the Gloucester subplot over the undoing of Lear, George and Cocoa seem to "slenderly know [themselves]" during their romance like Lear does throughout most of Shakespeare's play (1.2.288-9).

As Lear seems cognizant of his plans in the first act of the play, George also initially appears in control of his life even though he was orphaned when three months old after his young mother drowns. After his mother's death, he spends his childhood at the Wallace P. Andrews Shelter for Boys. Overcoming these difficult circumstances, George earns an engineering degree from Columbia University and begins a successful career in a New York firm. Yet despite his success, George refuses to think of the future and represses his painful past. Instead, he lives by the motto of the boys' shelter: "only the present has potential" (23). However, George's pragmatic approach to life is quickly "turned [...] upside-down" by Cocoa (33) in a manner similar to Ferdinand's experience with Miranda in The Tempest. Ferdinand is bewitched by Ariel's song and Miranda's beauty, and Prospero forces the bewildered prince into a sort of imprisonment to test his fitness as Miranda's potential husband. While George does not suffer the same test as Ferdinand, confusion definitely plays a role in his marriage to Cocoa. He begins to question the role of logic as he and Cocoa begin their life together, yet reason continues to prevail as he buys practical books to explain and demystify the

menstrual cycle. In fact, George's sense of reason thrives, that is, until he accompanies Cocoa home to Willow Springs and Mama Day.

Even before meeting George, Mama Day holds a favorable opinion of her great niece's husband similar to Prospero's approval of Ferdinand. She appreciates that George "won't let [Cocoa] have her way" (109), and she also likes that "he holds his head up high" (194). However, George's inability to recognize Mama Day's powers produces the central conflict in the novel. David Cowart asserts that:

The single great source of disharmony, [Naylor] intimates, lies in an overturning, centuries ago, of matriarchal authority and its divine counterpart. The world still reels from this displacement of the Goddess, the Great Mother. (444)

While Naylor's depiction of George is consistently favorable, he essentially represents patriarchal prejudice in the novel. George's sensibilities dictate that he deny the organic forces emanating from Mama Day. Gary Storhoff views the relationship between Mama Day and George in Jungian terms, and he finds that George's problem revolves around his inability to acknowledge his anima, or feminine side. Storhoff also notes Mama Day's association with eggs, "a symbol of fertility" (37). Even though Mama Day has no children, life seems to spring from her "gifted hands" (Naylor 89). She helps an infertile couple conceive after several failed attempts and has delivered most of the babies of Willow Springs. Mama Day also "cooperates with natural forces" as her garden flourishes and her chickens produce large quantities of eggs (Storhoff 37).

While George shows a healthy respect for the natural world and the "unused air," he thinks the island could be put to better use (185). He does not want the land used for anything

"parasitic like resorts or vacation condominiums, but experimental stations for solar energy, marine conservation" (185). However, George realizes that the Willow Springs community would never agree to his plan as "even well-meaning progress and paradise don't go hand in hand" (185). Cowart describes George "as [an] engineer and Republican [...], a man wholly committed to the Logos, impervious to the matrifocal wisdom of the island and its current matriarch" (453). George's dismissal of Mama Day's powers becomes clear in his comments surrounding natural remedies. He casually remarks that "natural remedies are really in now. We have centers opening up all over the place in New York" (195). Mama Day quickly counters that "they always been 'in' down here. When doctors is scarce, folks ain't got much else" (195). George's flippant comment reveals not only his ignorance of the effectiveness of holistic healing but also his belief that alternative medicine is simply a trendy, unproven method when compared to traditional science.

After Cocoa becomes the victim of Ruby's jealousy and subsequent "black" magic, Mama Day must use her powers to save her great niece's life, but she needs George's help to do so. Initially, George resists any involvement in Mama Day's "mumbo jumbo" as he continues to focus on "what is real" like fixing the hurricane-damaged bridge to the mainland (295, 291). However, George must go to the "Other" place, the original home place of the Day family where tragedy looms large. After Mama Day exacts revenge on Ruby by calling down lightening and destroying part of the repaired bridge, George goes to the old house to find out what Mama Day wants him to do. What she tells him sounds ludicrous to his pragmatic ears: Mama Day bids George to take her walking stick and family ledger to the chicken coop, to find the red hen, and to bring back whatever he finds behind the nest. George scoffs at Mama Day's remedy and accuses her of

being "cruel" for "play[ing] these games" with Cocoa sick (296) in a manner similar to Ferdinand's response to Prospero's "mean task[s]" (3.1.4). Even though George thinks Mama Day is "a crazy old woman," he eventually tries to "take her way" (296, 299) in an attempt to save Cocoa's life just as Ferdinand labors for Miranda's love.

In discussing Mama Day's employment of George in the effort to cure Cocoa, Cowart cites the practices of ancient goddesses. Cowart explains that "the goddess chooses a consort, often a mortal, who enjoys her favor for a certain period before yielding himself up for sacrifice" (450). Ultimately, the "sacrificial death was ordained as a means to the goddess's great ends" (450). Cowart's account appears clearly present in the relationship between Mama Day and George. Whereas Prospero enslaves Ferdinand for the sake of asserting his own authority, Mama Day seeks George's assistance in hopes of saving Cocoa's life. With Mama Day's cane and ledger in hand, echoing Prospero's staff and book, George enters the hen house looking for something unknown to him. Once he locates the nest, the hen attacks him, and he begins to kill all of the chickens, first using the cane as his weapon, then the ledger. During this mêlée, George wonders "could it be that she wanted nothing but my hands?" (300). George accepts this as Mama Day's quest: that "he believes in himself - deep within himself" (285).

Even though George appears to realize Mama Day's objective, he suffers a massive heart attack on his way to see his ailing wife. Cocoa eventually recovers from Ruby's poison, but she feels her "world had come to an end" with George's death (302). While George's death is necessary according to Cowart's summation of goddess worship, George continues to influence Cocoa's sense of identity after his death. Cocoa continues to visit George's grave years after his death and after she

remarries. She even names her youngest son "George." When her son asks her what his predecessor looked like, Cocoa tells him that "he was named after a man who looked just like love" (310). Naylor's sympathetic treatment of George suggests that he is as much a victim of patriarchal power as the women. However, he is a man, and there is no place for his masculine empiricism on the island Cocoa will inherit from Mama Day. Near the end, Mama Day intimates that Cocoa will not only inherit the land, but also that the healing powers "will lay in the hands of the Baby Girl" once Miranda dies (307). Unlike Prospero in the closing scenes of The Tempest who abandons "[his] rough magic" (5.1.50), Mama Day "does not renounce her magical powers" (Andreas 116); instead, she anticipates Cocoa's acquisition of the gift of healing.

Throughout the novel, Naylor simultaneously rejects and reinforces the cultural authority of Shakespeare by using his works to fashion her own story. With the novel as her literary vehicle, Naylor "displaces the monologic voice of Prospero with multivocality and polyphony" (Andreas 115). Naylor presents the story of a family with a tragedy-laden past. Yet unlike Shakespeare, Naylor allows the story to be told from several different perspectives including both a feminine and masculine voice - Cocoa and George, respectively. Also, Naylor's female-centered structure produces an ending ripe with hope, not desolation. Gary Storhoff describes Naylor's undertaking as an "ambitious narrative project [that] is in essence a declaration of independence - an acknowledgment of the academic canon's value, but also an assertion of her racial and gender difference" (35). Ultimately, Naylor's fusion of Shakespearean elements with matriarchal myth makes it difficult to discern where the appropriation begins and ends, creating a sense of

autonomy from patriarchal primacy for both the writer and the work.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of Shakespeare's characterizations of women and minorities in King Lear and The Tempest in this paper, it is no surprise that many critics focus on the ethnocentric and misogynistic elements in his body of work. A recent MLA search of "Shakespeare and women" produced 402 hits, and a search of "Shakespeare and race" produced 111 hits. However, my ongoing concern is with the reasons contemporary writers such as Jane Smiley, Aimé Césaire, and Gloria Naylor return to plays written roughly four-hundred years ago to comment on the social flaws of modern society.

While Smiley, Césaire, and Naylor appear to view Shakespeare's works as the paradigm of patriarchy, the role of the patriarchal family was in flux during Shakespeare's own time. Sarup Singh discusses the emerging leadership role of the father in the Renaissance family. Due to the instability of the crown in the sixteenth century, there was an urgent "need for the reinforcement of the patriarchal principle," a need "to create a general climate in which the King could be respected and obeyed" (1-2). Singh surmises that "the surest way to create such a climate was to inculcate respect for authority and a sense of obedience to one's superiors in the family itself," thus establishing the father as the sole ruler of the familial unit (2).

Even though the father was the sovereign of his family, the concept of individuality was gaining popularity by the late sixteenth century. Singh sees Shakespeare as "operat[ing] within two somewhat conflicting world views" (10). The first view is that of the patriarchal society at large, and the second one "demanded the freedom of the individual and asserted the possibility of change and evolution" (10). By viewing the

conflicting mores of Shakespeare's own time, his somewhat sympathetic characterization of Caliban within the constraints of the prevailing ideology of Prospero reflects his attempt to attain "a reconciliation between the two views" (10).

Just as Shakespeare struggled to strike a balance between "tradition and custom and what is possible and practicable" in early modern England (10), Jane Smiley finds similar problems in late-twentieth century America. However, Smiley finds Shakespeare's portrayals of Goneril and Regan decidedly offensive and seeks to remedy the fault in her novel A Thousand Acres. In commenting on her writing process, Smiley reflects on her readings of King Lear:

As I followed him into the story, the Shakespeare that I thought I knew rapidly metamorphosed into a harsher, more alien, and more distant male figure. I felt very strongly our differences as a modern woman and a Renaissance man. (54)

Even though Smiley appreciates the historical difference of the ideology of the Renaissance in relation to that of the present, she does not excuse Shakespeare from censure in her work for his demonization of Goneril and Regan. Smiley goes on to admit she did not "[win] the wrestling match with Mr. Shakespeare" in her novel (55); however, she contends that she "had not given in to Mr. Shakespeare's alleged universality, but had, in fact, cut him down to size a little bit" (56).

"Cutting" Shakespeare down appears to be at least part of Aimé Césaire's purpose in A Tempest. An influential opponent of colonialism, Césaire attacks Shakespeare's portrayal of Caliban as a freak who ultimately accepts the primacy of Prospero's authority. Instead, Césaire presents Caliban as an island native proud of his African heritage. In Césaire's telling, Prospero appears foolish at best as Caliban declares his freedom

from slavery. And while Césaire's adopted language is French, not English, he chooses to "write back" to Shakespeare, in a sense suggesting "that no corner of white culture should be immune to skeptical scrutiny" (Porter 362).

While both Smiley and Césaire directly borrow from Shakespeare's King Lear and The Tempest, respectively, Disney selectively samples from The Tempest. If Smiley and Césaire decry the patriarchal and cultural dominance of Shakespeare, Disney delights in it. In their animated film The Little Mermaid, Disney does Shakespeare one better by making the villain both female and ethnically different. By collapsing Caliban into his mother Sycorax, Disney creates the queen of mean, Ursula, the octopus seawitch in a world dominated by merpeople. Juxtaposed against Ursula is Triton, a father even more righteous than Prospero, and Ariel, a lovesick daughter as becoming as Miranda. Ultimately, Disney celebrates in the patriarchal harmony present in Shakespeare's The Tempest by vilifying Ursula and valorizing Triton and Ariel.

While the agenda of the previous three works of appropriation is clear, Gloria Naylor samples from both King Lear and The Tempest in creating her novel, Mama Day. While suggesting a matriarchal order with her depiction of Willow Springs, Naylor creates an incredibly likeable male character in George Andrews. Naylor engages directly with Shakespeare in her novel as her characters discuss King Lear. More significantly, one of her characters misquotes Shakespeare in the course of the novel. When George asks Cocoa for another date after a particularly abysmal evening together, Cocoa has the interior response of "surely, he jests" (64). Cocoa expresses surprise at her initial reaction:

I swear, that's the first thing that popped into my head when [George] asked me out again. I don't know

where that phrase came from – had to be something from my high school Shakespeare and [George] had been going on and on about him earlier in the evening. (64)

Valerie Traub points out that the line “is not something from [Cocoa’s] ‘high school Shakespeare’” (159). Traub makes the convincing argument “that this phrase *sounds* like Shakespeare but apparently was not *penned* by Shakespeare registers simultaneously how omnipresent and how dispersed a figure of cultural authority ‘Shakespeare’ has become” (159). By misquoting Shakespeare, Naylor appears to be denying his predominance as a “cultural authority” just as she had denied Shakespearean influence on the structure of her novel.

Whether Smiley, Césaire, or Naylor agree on the proposed universality of Shakespeare’s themes seems moot as their works of appropriation receiving consideration in this paper are only a small sample of the innumerable borrowings of Shakespeare in contemporary fiction and in film. While there may initially appear to be a gulf of difference dividing A Thousand Acres, A Tempest, The Little Mermaid, and Mama Day, they all employ Shakespeare for similar ends: to appeal to and acquire a wider audience. Both Smiley and Césaire use the existing frame supplied by Shakespeare as an outlet for social commentary in their works. Disney employs Shakespearean elements to legitimize their animated film. And although Naylor denies his influence, Shakespeare definitely has a greater presence in her novel than her use of Shakespearean names and her discussion of King Lear. Naylor’s thoughtful treatment of George Andrews is powerfully reminiscent of Shakespeare’s style; in her ambiguous characterization of the sole representative of the patriarchy, Naylor channels Shakespeare as evidenced in his powerful portrayal of Caliban and numerous other “villain” characters in his plays. While critics like Gary Taylor downplay

Shakespeare's presence as "becom[ing], like caviar, familiar to the General but arcane in the ranks" (202), others like Harold Bloom deify the playwright as creating our sense of humanity. Ultimately, Shakespeare's portrayal of the family continues to mirror our conception of familial relations just as his body of work continues to influence the direction of contemporary storytellers.

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